



Airman 1st Class Paul Kinsey disconnects the engine lift from the newly changed P117 Pratt and Whitney (C-17) engine. The average time to change a C-17 engine is 16 hours.

Propulsion flight keeps the engines revved and ready to go

By Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith
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Behind every successful air mission are the hard working and dedicated maintenance troops of the backshops. The members of the 437th Component Repair Squadron Propulsion Flight are one such group.

"For some people, our job is hard to understand because we no longer build up and tear down engines like we used to," said Master Sgt. Ollie Fountain, flight chief. "But we're the back bone of the engine world and we're still a big part of the mission."

The propulsion flight is responsible for the engines and support equipment on all Charleston-based C-17s here and at the five enroute locations. The flight also maintains serviceable engines and support equipment for the C-141. Their responsibilities include inspecting, servicing and installing engines on

both types of aircraft.

The propulsion flight is a separate entity from the 437th Equipment Maintenance Squadron Home Station Check element, but the two sections work closely together.

The C-17 is required to undergo home station checks every 120 days, which averages out to three inspections a week for the propulsion flight.

There are 32 people assigned to the propulsion flight who perform that mission on a daily basis.

"When I first joined, the shops were 200 strong. Now, we're working with 32 people," said Fountain. "The mission has changed but the workload really hasn't."

The flight maintains a 24-hour, five day-a-week work schedule with a weekend on-call roster. "Most of the time our people are working the weekends, though," said Fountain.

The heavy workload and extra hours don't seem to bother the members of the flight.

"I love what I do," said Senior Airman Christian Vandall, an engine mechanic. "Every day is a different challenge and I work with great people. The supervision is the best I've had in my Air Force career."

Fountain credits the success of the flight to the hard work and dedication of the troops and civilians. "The younger airmen learn fast. They take their knowledge and run with it," he said. "The civilians are our wealth of experience and we wouldn't be successful without them."



Staff Sgt. Brad Rawn removes a plastic cap and serviceable tag from a newly installed C-17 engine.



Airman 1st Class Angelo Apa monitors the servicing of the oil level on a C-17 engine.



Senior Airman Christian Vandall removes plastic from a serviceable TF33-P7A (C-141) engine recently received from Tinker AFB, Okla.

photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew Rodier